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ABSTRACT

What references, if any, do some of the major educational reform reports make about the American Indian? Reform reports were reviewed to determine their content regarding minorities in general and American Indians in particular. With the exception of the Carnegie Forum report and possibly the National Governors' Association report, very little was said about minorities and virtually nothing was said about American Indians. The reports from the U.S. Department of Education were especially conspicuous in their neglect. Reports addressing disadvantaged students were also reviewed, as were two efforts that deal specifically with Indian education. Finally, this document discusses how such national reform reports affect American Indian education. The document concludes by linking such exclusion of American Indians and the failure of their school systems in continuing institutional racism. This paper contains 28 references. (TES)

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Educational Neglect: Reform Reports and the Schooling of American Indians

John W. Tippeconnic III

"Reform" has been the dominant theme in education during the 1980's. Virtually every major professional organization concerned about education has issued its own version of what constitutes "excellence" and "quality" in teaching and learning. Governors, federal bureaucrats, business leaders, religious groups, and others have joined educators to suggest ways to improve the education of our youth. Education has been viewed as the means for our country to continue to be a world leader; to help solve our economic woes; and in essence, to preserve our democracy ideology.

Comparisons between the United States and other countries have been made with less than satisfying results. In our own country, knowledge of history, geography, math, is not what it once was; neither are the standardized test scores; neither are the number of minorities preparing to be teachers. Education has become an economic and political issue, with Presidential hopefuls hoping to win votes by debating the pros and cons of what should be done in education.

Yet, if reform reports are accurate reflections of discussions, findings, and recommendations of the various reform groups, then once again, American Indians can be considered the "forgotten American." To those of us who are concerned about the education of American Indians,[1] the content of the reform reports

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are noticeably absent of any meaningful treatment of the American Indian. Even more disturbing, is the less than adequate attention given to minorities[2] in general.

Perhaps, it is assumed in these reports that specific minority groups should not be singled out; or that the recommendations apply to all Americans; or that groups like the American Indian are insignificant because of their small numbers; or no one thought to discuss and report minority educational concerns; or worse yet, conscious omission reflects another form of institutional racism in our country.

Reform Reports

What follows is an analysis of some of the major reform reports in education since 1983. Each report will be reviewed in terms of what it has to say about American Indians; however, it is assumed that very little will be said about our country's first inhabitants. Because American Indians are considered minorities, each report will also be reviewed for any reference to minorities.

A Nation at Risk (1983) is considered a significant report because focus was put on education as the vehicle to address the "rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and as a people" (p. 5). Needless to say, American Indians were not mentioned in the report. Blacks were mentioned once, in reference to how the Black colleges provided educational

opportunity to the majority of college-educated Black Americans (p.34). Other than that, specific minority groups were not identified nor discussed. There were two cases where the term minority is grouped with the gifted and talented, handicapped students, or the socioeconomically disadvantaged; first when referring to a shortage of "language minority" teachers and, second, when recommending the Federal Government, with help from the States and localities, should help met the needs of "minority and language minority students."

A Nation Responds: Recent Efforts to Improve Education (1984) described, to that point, the national and state by state response to reform movement. It is appalling that minorities are not mentioned once in 146 descriptive pages of the national and state initiatives in education. The report, produced by the U.S. Department of Education, also contained a brief description of professional associations and organizations; it is only in this context that Blacks are mentioned once (p. 196) and Hispanics once (p. 201).

Action for Excellence: A Comprehensive Plan to Improve Our Nation's Schools (1983), a report from the Task Force on Education for Economic Growth recognizes the following when discussing educational deficits among minorities:

> ...by 1990 more than forty percent of urban students nationwide will be members of minorities, we face a

> special challenge here: to improve educational results among minority students so that they can increase their representation in the high-skill fields that will provide upward mobility in the future (p. 22), and Social progress (of minorities), ironically, intensifies the difficulty. In former years, when women and minorities suffered greater job discrimination than today, teaching was often their major opportunity for work at a professional level. Today, however, job opportunities are broadening for women and minorities; teaching can no longer monopolize their talents (p. 25).

The report makes one recommendation pertaining to minorities: "serve better those students who are now unserved or underserved" (p. 40) by making special efforts to increase the number of women and minorities in courses related to careers in which these groups are underrepresented. Again, American Indians are not mentioned. Like A Nation At Risk, Blacks are mentioned once in the context that they are now almost as likely as Whites to graduate from high school (p. 44).

In 1986, the U.S. Department of Education released What Works: Research About Teaching and Learning. The report was widely disseminated, free of charge to the general public, with the intent of providing accurate and reliable information about

what works in education (p. v). Forty-one research findings were presented about teaching and learning within the areas of home, classroom and school.

It is amazing that minorities were not mentioned once in the findings or the discussion about the findings. In fact, concepts that usually relate to minorities were not even mentioned, i.e., bilingual education, American Indian education, multicultural education, cultural pluralism, or even culture and language. These omissions are clearly obvious to educators of culturally different children.

The only reference to minorities is in the introduction, where Secretary of Education, William J. Bennett poses the question, "Why is so much of the research about elementary schools and disadvantaged children?" His response refers to the failing of conventional wisdom of 20 years ago that held "disadvantaged and minority children did poorly in school mainly because of the inequitable distribution of educational resources" (pp. 2-3). The Coleman Report is cited as evidence that "unequal achievement could not be ascribed to unequal school resources" (p.3). This led researchers to examine "the interaction between teacher and student rather than just the effects of school facilities, spending levels, or class size" (p. 3). Glass (1987) maintains that the "questioning of the validity of racial desegregation as a research issue ignores a finding so visible

they could not be ignored," namely the work done by "The National Assessment of Educational Progress, Jones and Burton, and Robert Crain in integrating the many studies on the topic" (p. 8).

It appears Bennett's response and the context in which minorities are mentioned is an attack on the liberal educational reforms and the progress many educators felt was made in the 1960's and 1970's. Glass (1987) maintains that What Works is an expression of conservative educational policy which include educational findings that are:

> ...ideologically consistent with what was evident as the policies of the Reagan administration in the early years (before What Works appeared). One can imagine that the contents of What Works were determined more by this political ideology than by a pluralistic reading of the body of educational research. The political goals of What Works are those of the administration that produced it: to disestablish the federal bureaucracy in education, to decentralize control over education, to deregulate the practice of schooling, and to diminish financial support for schools (p. 8).

> What Works...is not an encyclopedia of findings of research on school teaching and learning, nor is it

> a pluralistic and neutral taking stock of the corpus of educational research; it is, mirabile dictu, a political document (p. 9).

In 1986 there were two reports released within a month of each other that concerned teaching: Tomorrow's Teachers: A Report of The Holmes Group and Carnegie's Report A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century. Both reports received a considerable amount of attention and have been influential in changes in teacher preparation programs. American Indians are mentioned in the Carnegie Report but not in the Holmes report.

The Holmes Group, mainly made up of education deans from research institutions, limits its focus to problems in teacher education. Five goals are suggested with an action agenda to improve the teaching profession. Perhaps the most controversial recommendation of the Holmes Group is their commitment to "phase out the undergraduate education major in member institutions and develop in its place a graduate professional program in teacher education" (p. 63).

As previously indicated, American Indians are not mentioned in the report, and neither are Blacks, Hispanics, or Asians. The term "minority" is used once in reference to the preparation of minorities as teachers:

> Minority undergraduate enrollments and minority entry to teaching have been declining at the very time when

> the proportion of minority children in schools has been increasing. Unless this problem is addressed, we may soon have a teacher force composed overwhelmingly of people from majority backgrounds teaching students who are primarily from low-income and minority backgrounds. Holmes Group institutions commit themselves to significantly increasing the number of minorities in their teacher education programs (p. 66).

Grant and Gillette (1987) consider the attention given to minority teachers in the Holmes Report "minuscule." They point out that the paragraph quoted above appears on page 66 of a 68 page report and appears to say "Oh, yes, let's not forget minority teacher candidates" (p. 517). They also state:

> We question whether the Holmes Group is committed to paying more than lip service to issues of students and teachers of color. If the response is offered that. Tomorrow's Teachers was written as a general statement and not to address a specific population of teachers, our query would still stand.
>
> If the Holmes Group spend...two years probing problems and exploring remedies in education and the topic of minority teachers is not clearly evident in their debate, its absence is a compelling example of the sin of omission. It illustrates how minorities and other

> groups are disfranchised politically, economically, and socially - specifically, in teacher education but in all other aspects of education as well (p. 517).

The second major report on teaching, A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century (1986) was developed by noted business leaders, politicians, and educators, including the teacher union presidents of the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers. The report relates education to our economy by stating:

> If our standard of living is to be maintained, if the growth of a permanent underclass is to be averted, if democracy is to function effectively into the next century, our schools must graduate the vast majority of their students with achievement levels long thought possible for only the privileged few.

With this statement, the report goes on to make a number of statements about minorities. It makes the point that by the year 2000, one out of three Americans will be a member of a minority group; and we must not leave minorities out if America is to succeed in the changing world economy (p. 14).

The need for minority teachers is mentioned often (pp. 32, 65, 79, 112). "Native Americans" are specifically mentioned in referring to attracting and recruiting individuals into teaching (p. 79). A chart is given that shows "Blacks, Chicanos, Puerto

Ricans, and American Indians" drop out of the educational pipeline, or progression from high school to graduate school, much faster than Anglo children (p. 39). Another chart reports the mean SAT scores for college bound Blacks, Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans are lower when compared to Whites (p. 81). A five step plan is presented to get more minorities into teaching (p. 80).

In a section of the report that discussed teacher education programs, it was mentioned that some of the current programs produced graduates who lacked knowledge in "responding to problems of students from varied social, economic and racial backgrounds" (p. 71). Another section on standards in teaching, mentioned that minorities have an approximate 70 percent or more failure rate on examinations recently adopted in many states to qualify individuals entry into teaching. Finally, 12 papers were commissioned as part of the study; two of which had references to minorities in their titles (p. 126).

The recognition of minorities in this report are substantial, especially in the need and recommendation to get more minority teachers.

Time for Results: The Governors' 1991 Report on Education (1986) presents educational issues considered important by our nation's governors because "better schools mean better jobs" and we must educate ourselves better to meet competition from workers

in the rest of the world (p. 2). The document is an indication that education is considered a priority and a political issue for states. A common thread in the report is that the Governors will "regulate less, if schools and school districts will produce better results" (p. 3). Seven issues in education are included in the report, with recommendations in each. The seven issue areas are: Teaching, Leadership and Management, Parent Involvement and Choice, Readiness, Technology, School Facilities and College Quality. The report is set up to indicate where the governors want to be in five years or 1991.

The report includes numerous pictures of teachers and students, many of which are minorities. Like other reform reports, the point is made that, "In 1991, 25 percent of our students will be from minority groups" and the "demographics of the teaching force will be different. If the current trends continue, fewer minorities will enter teaching" (p. 51). However, in the recommendations on teaching, the finding seems to be ignored because there is no mention of recruiting and retaining minority teachers nor preparing teachers to work with minority students.

In discussing parental involvement and choice, it is mentioned that policy makers must direct attention to disadvantaged students if they are to make progress. Levin is quoted as saying the general reforms "have little impact on the

educational fortunes of the disadvantaged unless other changes are made" (p. 70). Choice, or allowing families to select the public school they want to attend, should "no way foster racial, social and economic segregation," but promote equity (pp. 72-73) and "increase desegregation and integration of public schools" (p. 76).

American Indians are mentioned once in the report. In discussing readiness, the point is made that "Traditionally, our nation's schools have been least successful with students who are Black, Hispanic, or Native American and who come from single parent homes or low-income families" (p. 99). There is considerable reference made to "at risk" children when discussing readiness. Blacks, also are specially mentioned a number of times. The report lists 20 supplemental and commissioned papers, only one of which uses terminology in its title--"at risk"-- that can be associated with minorities (pp. 172-73).

First Lessons: A Report on Elementary Education in America (1986) is self-professed to be the first major report, since 1953, to examine the elementary education in this country. The report, put together by a 21 member study group, is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education and reflects the personal views of Secretary of Education William J. Bennett. The report addresses elementary education from the context of children, parents, and the community of adults; the curriculum; elementary

school professionals; school policy; and concludes with examples of what is possible in schools.

Specific reference to minorities is minimal, often in the context of giving examples of successful programs or activities. American Indians are referred to once in a section on parents and schools; noting that parent attendance improved at school meetings when the school district provided transportation and babysitting services to parents from the San Carlos Apache Reservation in Arizona (p. 13). Asians, Hispanics, and Blacks are specifically mentioned in an example of an elementary school in Cupertino, California that understands "excellence grows from dedication and respect - and a little fun, too" (p.64).

Also, it is noted that children in elementary schools represent a population that is "racially and ethnically heterogeneous" and that their "diversity is socioeconomic" in nature (pp. 7-8).

The discussion about the elementary school curriculum cited the Reading Report Card to point out many of our children cannot read satisfactorily and "Worse, most minority youngsters (65 percent of Blacks, 61 percent of Hispanics) were reading below the intermediate level in 1984" (p. 22). The curriculum section also mentions that at the end of eighth grade, children should be able to explain, among other things, "slavery" and "civil rights" and have read "Martin Luther King's 'I Have A Dream' speech" (pp.

31-32). Finally, in a discussion about cultural literacy, it is mentioned that a problem for those who design tests "is that minority and non-English proficient students may lack certain kinds of knowledge taken for granted among the majority population. Yet the problem is not limited to minorities" (p.34).

In a discussion about educational standards and social promotion, First Lessons cites a former Los Angeles Board of Education member who said "All too often those who suffer the most from no-fail policies are students from disadvantaged backgrounds, including minorities" (p. 54). In advocating standards for all children, the statement is made that "virtually all children can meet minimum educational standards if given the time and resources. That's why it's so wrong to expect less of them" (p.53).

Finally, a section of the report discusses "Language-Minority Children." In essence, the discussion recognizes the diversity in languages that can be found in elementary classrooms today and that schools must find ways to best educate children whose first languages are Spanish (Hispanics) or an Indochinese language (Asians). Secretary Bennett believes that specific methods should be decided locally, as long as children learn to speak, read, and write English as soon as possible (p. 62).

The Next Wave: A Synopsis of Recent Education Reform Reports

(1987) was an attempt to review nine individual reform reports and identify points of agreement and unresolved issues. Five of nine reports included in the review are also included in this effort. One point of agreement is "Education must take new steps to address the unique needs of minorities." In addressing minority concerns, the report notes that:

> The standard approach, used by the Carnegie Forum and other groups, is to devote special attention to the difficulties minorities face and make special recommendations. The assumption is that educational reform will not sufficiently improve the situation of minorities unless it includes specific steps that address their unique needs (p.10).

That is the only reference made to minorities in the synopsis. American Indians are not specifically mentioned, neither are Blacks, Hispanics, or Asians.

The Education Commission of the States also produced a chart that reflected A Compilation of the Major Recommendations on Teacher Education (1986) from four reports that focused on teacher education. The Holmes Group report was included. In a listing of 46 recommended program requirements and recommended roles, 3 mention or infer minorities. The first identified the Holmes Group as the only report that recommended attention be given in teacher education programs to developing strategies for

effectively teaching diverse students. The second and third points dealt with recommended roles. All four reports agreed that the Federal and state governments encourage universities to develop programs to recruit capable minority teacher candidates, and one report released by the Southern Regional Education Board recommended that leaders in minority communities mount a campaign to recruit qualified minority students into teaching careers (pp. 2-3).

In summary, the reform reports reviewed above have little to say about minorities, and practically nothing to say about American Indians. It seems that in some reports minorities, including American Indians, do not exist in this country. This is especially true for the U.S. Department of Education reports, e.g., A Nation at Risk, A Nation Responds: Recent Efforts to Improve Education, or What Works: Research About Teaching and Learning. It is as though prejudice, discrimination, and racism are things of the past and that the educational treatment can be the same for everyone, without regard to past educational and socioeconomic situations. To ignore significant portions of our population is to ignore our rich cultural diversity.

The political documents of the Department of Education reflect assimilation rather than cultural pluralism for minorities. As Boyer (How Not to Fix the Schools, 1987) indicated, "This is a school reform movement, in short, driven by

political and economic interest, not by educational and human ones" (p. 42).

In fairness, the Carnegie Forum (1986) report must be recognized for rejecting the view that we must choose between quality and equity and concluding that America must have both. As noted, minorities are given a fair amount of attention in the report.

"Disadvantaged" Student Reports

There have been several reports that dealt exclusively with disadvantaged students, including minorities. Three of the reports will be discussed here. Again, any reference to American Indians will be noted. The first report, Educational Reform for Disadvantaged Students: An Emerging Crisis (1986) mentions that a major shortcoming of the educational reform is the relatively little it has to offer educationally disadvantaged students (p. 5). In fact, "some of the general reforms may actually create new obstacles to improving the situation for disadvantaged students" (p.19). It is suggested that a successful approach must focus directly on the disadvantaged and "will require a coordinated and comprehensive approach, great sensitivity to the requirements for effective local implementation, and appropriation of adequate resources" (p. 23). American Indians are not mentioned in the report. Occasionally Blacks and Hispanics are referred to, but for the most part it is assumed

that minorities are part of the "disadvantaged" grouping.

The second report, Schools That Work: Educating Disadvantaged Children, published by the U.S. Department of Education is patterned after What Works: Research About Teaching and Learning (1986). Sixteen recommendations are made within the categories of What schools can do; What parents, guardians, and communities can do; and What local, state, and the Federal Government can do. As each recommendation is made, examples of schools around the country are given to demonstrate what they have done.

Again, American Indians are not mentioned, not even in the opening sections that reflect U.S. Census data or in the discussion of poverty. Blacks, Hispanics, and Asians are referred to in examples of schools and programs; otherwise, minorities are grouped together under "disadvantaged."

Children in Need: Investment Strategies for the Educationally Disadvantaged (1987) is the third report that relates to minorities. It is noted that the "reform efforts have largely bypassed the problems of the educationally disadvantaged --the 30 percent of children facing major risk of educational failure" (p. ix). Education is mentioned as a "pathway out of poverty" (p. 2) and a means to a "competitive position in an increasingly challenging global marketplace" (p. 4). Thus, the business community was called upon to take the lead in working

with education, parent organizations, civic groups, and all levels of government to meet the special needs of disadvantaged students (p. ix). Three areas were suggested as a strategy for reform: prevention through early intervention, restructuring the schools, and retention and reentry programs (p. x). Each area is discussed in some detail with examples of real situations that support recommendations.

Again, American Indians are not mentioned in the report. Blacks and Hispanics are mentioned, but most of the references are either "minority" or the "disadvantaged."

In summary, the three reports recognize the omission of disadvantaged students from previous reform efforts; point to the need to include them; and present strategies to meet their educational needs. It is interesting that the term "disadvantaged" is used in all three of the reports; "minorities," or "Blacks", "Hispanics", or "Asians" are seldom used. "American Indians" are not referred to at all.

American Indians

On the surface it is difficult to disagree with many of the recommendations in the reform reports. It is almost anti-American to disagree with the "quality," "excellence," "better," or "higher standards," framework in which the recommendations are couched. They also appeal to our patriotism when comparing American educational and economic data with other countries. It

appears that the economic, social, and educational base for Americans is equal and that our values are the same. Beneath the surface, we know things are not equal for many Americans, including American Indians. Given inequality and the past history of people of color in America, it becomes difficult to accept many of the reform report recommendations without further considerations.

American Indians are a unique group in America. The uniqueness is based on a special relationship between Indian nations or tribes and the Federal Government that was established as a result of approximately 400 treaties, and further developed by subsequent Presidential executive orders, acts of Congress, and Supreme Court decisions. The treaties granted Indian nations, among other things, certain services from the Federal Government in exchange for vast amounts of Indian land. Thus, to this day, the Federal Government plays a key role in the education of Indian people by operating a national school system in the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and by providing funds to educate Indian students attending public schools.

Today there are 1,423,043 American Indians residing in the United States, approximately one-fourth of which live on one of the 278 Federal or State Reservations (Bureau of the Census, 1984). There are approximately 363,545 Indian elementary and secondary students attending school. Approximately 82% attend

public school, 8% attend BIA schools, and the rest attend tribal contract or religious schools (Bureau of Indian Affairs, 1987).

History has shown that the formal education of American Indians has been "a failure, a national tragedy" (U.S. Senate, 1969).[3] Assimilation, either forced or through persuasion, has been the dominant policy of the Federal Government which has guided the educational approach for American Indians. The formal education of Indian people has resulted in educational data that has virtually put the Indian at the bottom of every category. Since 1970, the official policy of the Federal Government toward American Indians has been Self-Determination; meaning more involvement and control in the education of their students.

American Indian Reports

There have not been any reports or studies that have related the educational reform movement to American Indians. Two efforts come close; the first is a report of the American Indian/Alaska Native Concerns Study Committee (1987) that is part of a larger report ...And Justice for All published by the National Education Association, which also includes individual study reports for Blacks, Hispanics, and Asian and Pacific Islanders. The purpose of the American Indian report was to investigate the educational needs of American Indian students and educators; to determine the impact of the various reform initiatives on Indian

students and educators; and identify support systems that relate to these concerns (p. 4). Their findings did not directly address the impact of the reform movement on Indian education, but they are worth mentioning to get an understanding of some of the issues confronting Indian education today:

> The commitment, sincerity, and dedication of educational program personnel was evident at each site, There is not and never should be any question about the commitment of American Indian/Alaska Native parents and tribal leaders to achieving quality education for their children,
>
> There are imaginative efforts to improve education for American Indians/Alaska Native students in a wide array of schools and communities,
>
> In Washington, D.C. there is widespread concern about the "trust responsibility" established by treaties between Indian tribes and the U.S. government,
>
> The top federal position in Indian education, the director of Indian education slot in the Department of Education, has gone vacant for five years,

Funding for Indian education projects is not delivered in a timely manner,

The need to identify and increase the number of American Indian/Alaska Native teachers,

Inadequate funding of the education programs for Indian children and untimely notification regarding the level of funding are the biggest issues confronting the American Indian/Alaska Native community,

Enhancing the self-concept of Indian students is essential to the education of Indian students,

Studies are needed in the effects of Headstart programs and the mobility of Indian students,

Teachers need to develop different teaching techniques that are culturally relevant. Schools need to do a better job teaching Indian history,

Non-Indian people need to develop an understanding and respect for American Indians and Alaska Natives,

> Indian students often must pay a high cultural price for their education. Students who leave their communities to continue their studies find themselves forced to learn new skills to survive in the non-Indian world. Once their studies are complete, these Indian students often have trouble returning to their Indian communities. They are seen as outsiders who have adopted non-Indian ways,
>
> Current educational institutions are not responsive to the needs of American Indian/Alaska Native students,
>
> Language is a very important support system for youth because it transmits culture,
>
> And, more networking between educational groups-Indian and non-Indian-is essential (pp. 11-17).

The report went on to make 39 recommendations adopted by the NEA Board of Directors. The recommendations are grouped in the areas of: students; curriculum and instruction, teachers and school personnel; parents, family, and community; employment; cultural sensitivity and differences; collaboration and coalition building; legislative and policy, and leadership training (pp. 18-20).

The second effort, by Tippeconnic (1988), asked Indian educators what impact the national reform movement had on the education of American Indians. Forty-five percent of the respondents reported that the reform movement had little or no impact on the education of American Indians. Only 13.3 percent felt there was significant impact. When asked to elaborate, respondents indicated that the reform does not address the educational needs of Indian people; there is a lack of resources, mainly money, to meet the needs of Indian students; and there is a movement from culturally relevant to academic activities.

A related question asked if the education of American Indians had improved, gotten worse, or stayed the same during the past five years. Thirty-three percent felt it had improved; 35 percent felt it had gotten worse; and 28 percent said it stayed the same.

Conclusions: Reform Reports and the American Indian

What does all this mean for the American Indian? What are some conclusions that can be reached after reviewing the reform reports, "disadvantaged" student reports, and the two American Indian efforts? The first observation is very obvious. As mentioned at the beginning of this paper, American Indians, as an identifiable group of people in America, are not recognized in any substantive way in any of the reform reports. When American Indians are mentioned they are grouped with other minorities,

usually Blacks and Hispanics; or it is assumed that the terms "disadvantaged" or "minority" include American Indians.

American Indians represent less than one percent of the total population in the United States. 305,730 or 0.8 percent of the total public elementary and secondary student enrollment in this country are American Indian (Center for Education Statistics, 1986). Perhaps these small numbers render the education of American Indians insignificant in the larger scheme of things.

The omission appears to be a political statement that is reflective of the long standing Federal policy of assimilation of American Indians into the mainstream, and certainly of the Reagan Administration's view of education toward culturally different people. The education of American Indians is just low in priority in this country.

A second observation is that even through American Indians were not specifically mentioned in many of the reports, the implementation of the recommendations will impact the education of Indian people simply because Americans Indians are part of the educational system in this country. The impact can be positive or it can be negative. However, without specific consideration of the educational needs of American Indians, the likelihood is great that the impact will be negative. A number of the reports agree, indicating that without specific strategies

many of the reform recommendations will not prove successful for disadvantaged students. For example, Shepard and Kreitzer (1987) report that there was a disproportionately higher failure rate among Blacks and Hispanics of the Texas mandated competency test for teachers and administrators (p. 26).

As noted earlier, eight percent or 28,810 American Indian students attend federal Bureau of Indian Affairs schools. The impact will probably be felt less in these schools because of the protective nature of the federal bureaucratic system. Also, because of the special relationship status, Indian education is often considered separate from general education in this country. Change comes slower in such situations.

A third observation is that the thrust of the reform report recommendations has been in the academics, e.g., more courses in math, science, English; increasing high school graduation requirements, etc. Since the 1960's, a great deal of emphasis has been placed on cultural awareness and self-concept activities in the education of American Indians, especially in supplemental programs. The reform focus on academics helped to lead a shift from cultural awareness and self-concept activities to basic academic areas in Indian education.

A fourth observation has to do with teacher education. The impact is being felt in two ways; in the number of American Indians preparing to be teachers, and in the way teachers in

general are being prepared to teach American Indians (Tippeconnic, 1983) or other culturally different people. The reports, especially the Carnegie Forum report, recognized the need for more minority teachers. And a large number of the reports recognized that the school enrollment of minorities is increasing at such a rate that by the year 2000 one out of every three will be a minority group member.

However, increased admission standards and competency test requirements for certification are already having an adverse effect on the number of Indian teachers. A recent study, reported in The Chronicle of Higher Education, concerned the need to recruit more minorities into teaching. It reported that 90% of the students preparing to be elementary teachers are White; and 92% of those preparing to be secondary teachers are White. American Indians make up less than one percent in both areas ("Plan to Encourage Minority Students," 1988). Although the full report many not attribute the low percentage of American Indians to increased admission standards and competency testing, it is safe to assume these are factors.

The effort to reform teacher education programs has also resulted in fewer courses in Indian education, bilingual education, and multicultural education. Often, the perceptions of these courses are that they are of little value, thus, they get pushed out to make room for "academic" courses.

A fifth observation is that many of the reform report recommendations, if implemented, are going to cost money, regardless of what Secretary Bennett says in Schools That Work: Educating Disadvantaged Children (1987). This is especially true in the education of Indian students. Resources are needed to address current educational deficiencies of Indian people; just to get to the point where many of the reform report recommendations can be seriously considered. As noted in the National Education Association (1987) report, the lack of funds continues to be a major concern in Indian education. The Federal Government, in both the Department of Education and in the Bureau of Indian Affairs, continue to under fund educational budgets for Indian students.

A sixth and final observation is that in order for the education of Indian people to be successful, their educational needs are going to have to be specifically identified and addressed before many of the general reform report recommendations are considered. In other words, American Indians have to be mentioned! Without any special consideration, the education of Indian people will be low in priority and will not receive any attention and support from influential business, educational, and political leaders of our country.

In summary, American Indians, for whatever reason, have been overlooked by the major educational reform reports. Why? The

best reason, and we hope, is that the omission was not deliberate and that, in fact, there may yet be some organized effort to include American Indians in the reform movement. However, this is difficult to accept given the past history of American Indian education in this country. The worst reason may be reflected in the following:

> Institutional racism is action taken by a social system or institution which results in negative outcomes for members of a certain group or groups. This [sic] definition of racism is [sic] behavioral, in that results, not intentions, are important. Most racism is unknowing or unintentional (Sedlacek & Brooks, 1976, pp. 5-6).

If the reform reports continue to neglect the American Indian, and if their schooling continues to be a failure, then institutional racism will continue to be a reality for many Indian students.

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Footnotes

[1]The term "American Indian" includes American Indians, Eskimos, Aleuts, and other Alaska Natives.

[2]The term "minorities" refers to American Indians, Blacks, Hispanics, and Asian and Pacific Islanders.

[3]A detailed history of American Indian education can be found in the American Indian Policy Review Commission report (1975), Szasz (1974), and the U.S. Senate report (1969).

Educational Neglect: Reform Reports and the Schooling of American Indians

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Abstract

What reference, if any, do some of the major educational reform reports make about the American Indian? Reform reports were reviewed to determine what they said about minorities in general, and about American Indians in particular. The findings were that, with the exception of the Carnegie Forum report and possibly the National Governors' Association report, very little was said about minorities and virtually nothing was said about American Indians. The reports from the U.S. Department of Education were especially conspicuous in their neglect. Reports that addressed disadvantaged students were also reviewed as were two efforts that deal specifically with Indian education. Finally, observations were made as to how the reform reports impact the education of American Indians. The conclusion was that if American Indians continue to be left out, and if their schooling continues to be a failure, then institutional racism will continue to be a reality for many Indian students.

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